

France at Bay *Pot 11/3/65*

No one with any appreciation of the ties of history and affection between the United States and France can want to aggravate the differences with President de Gaulle. The two countries are mature enough to have had many disagreements in the past without breaches of basic trust. When this is said, however, both governments must expect to be confronted with the logical consequences of their actions.

Americans and American policies are by no means blameless for the misunderstandings. Although this country's purpose has never been to dominate Europe, sometimes there has been insensitivity here to French and European desires and fears. American investment has appeared to overwhelm certain sectors of European industry including French industry, for example, and too often there has seemed to be an assumption that gratitude for past help ought to bring automatic concurrence with American leadership. All these have contributed to General de Gaulle's suspicion and even resentment.

But such matters, though important, are not the crux of the dispute. Since his return to power seven years ago but most particularly within the last three years, President de Gaulle publicly and privately has endorsed policies in fundamental conflict with American objectives respecting the future of NATO, equality of treatment for Germany, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, the United Nations, the gold standard and monetary reform. Others of his allies also have been dismayed by some of these positions as well as by his determination to thwart any supranational development in the Common Market or European unity generally.

Now, there is no question whatever of the sov-

ereign right of President de Gaulle and the French Government to pursue such policies as they see fit. No law compels the General to agree with or even to like the United States. The clash arises over the attempts to undercut this country in order to attain his objectives.

President de Gaulle has made no secret of his wish to reshape the Western Alliance to exclude American influence as far as possible from Europe, while at the same assuming that the United States will continue docilely to protect France. Obviously not all Frenchmen have participated in this kind of cultivated anti-Americanism, but there can be no doubt that many French organs and representatives around the world have been subtly carrying out de Gaulle's purposes by downgrading the United States. This is hardly a friendly practice.

For French authorities now to appear surprised because American officials have expressed annoyance, in response to press questions, does not say much for French sophistication. The contention that anti-Gaullist candidates in the presidential campaign are deterred from criticism for fear of seeming to side with the United States does not say much for French independent-mindedness. Since this newspaper's comments have been singled out, let us make clear that our own criticisms of President de Gaulle's approach stem from our long-expressed convictions and have in no way been inspired by a State Department briefing at which no *Washington Post* editors were present.

None of the divergences in the current Franco-Soviet communique issued at the end of Foreign Minister Couve de Murville's visit to Russia is half so alarming as the indication that relations between Paris and Washington are becoming neurotic. All of us may hope that the differences can be kept in low key in the recognition that the two countries remain allied on big questions. But there is no use pretending that the differences are not serious, because they are.